



# THE DECAYS OF COMPANIONSHIP: A STUDY OF SELECTED LITERATURE

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## ABSTRACT

Mental illness is seen quite common in women, sometimes it may be hysteria, delirium or depression. Always women are scorned, often considered acting or criticized for their reactions. But what is uncommon is people's search for the reason behind these conditions. In this research paper, selected text are taken to portray the condition of women in literature. Here, all the references motion towards the symptoms, cause and the depiction of women when they are psychologically suffering. Often the suffering arises from stifling marriages, stressful pregnancies and traumatic childhood. In accordance to the primary source the reason behind the uncured illness is often non-supportive, stereotypical and conservative men. And often this madness is often an escape from the sheltered sanity or delusional reality.

**KEYWORDS:** Hysteria, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, Women and Hallucinations, Silence, Relationship Failure and Women Writings.

## INTRODUCTION

The life of an ambitious and talented woman in the 19th century was the main issue to focus on. The ones that questioned everything and had something to fight for all the time, society diagnosed them with mental illnesses of sorts. That's how they were treated after they were married too; the negligence of their husband over their interests and passion. The relationship slowly deteriorates into a flaccid one, where every day is like a routine for the wives. The isolation is the said key for the treatment, as if they are afraid of ideas. Here, John had brought her to recuperate and get cured, in the isolated country estate: the new landscape. Patriarchy played a major role in this short story as it is hinted that he brought her there, it wasn't their mutual decision. The way John points out her illness, picks up the cure and then tells her to follow everything he says shows how much less he cares about her opinion regarding her own life. The title symbolizes the decaying of her marriage with John; where he tries to domesticate her and makes decisions concerning her life. "There comes John, and I must put this away, -he hates to have me write a word." (TYW, p. 6-48). He disapproves of her writing anything at all, not letting her pursue the one thing she's zealous about. Constant examination of the wall-paper hints to her imprisonment in the room, the designs moving and rolling about around the room is the only mobile thing in her imagination.

"There is a recurrent spot where the pattern lolls like a broken neck and two bulbous eyes stare at you upside down." (TYW, p 9-48). The wallpaper acts rather as a looking-glass, which mirrors her confined self trying to escape from the clutches of domestic conjugal life. Gazing at the wallpaper on daily basis and the discovery of new patterns shows her inactive status at home. It tends to occupy her overall thinking, trying to figure out her position at the household or in their marriage.

"Then he took me in his arms and called me a blessed little goose" (TYW, p. 8-48). Reflection at the way John treats his wife, the mother of his children; his use of endearments seems shallow and superficial. "Howls the same old song at the moon, Year in, year out, Season after season, same rhyme, and same reason." (TWW, p. 3-66). Narrator keeps on bringing up what

John thinks about various affairs of her life, like it's an opinion that matters or plainly: the repetition of it. How she is being fed and medicated periodically is the same as a kid, there is nothing new in her life. He wakes up early and leaves to tend to patients and she is at home wondering about the too pale wall-paper. "A tortoise, somebody's pet, creeping, slow as marriage." (TYW, p. 17-66). Even after giving birth to a child, their relationships seems to have failed in some way, the intimacy is not there. Their marriage seems to have passed stages of normalcy and yet it is progressing slowly towards compassion, or not. The way she keeps on mentioning majorly two things- John and the patterns on wall-paper, shows the boring regime of her daily life. "—a kind of "debased Romanesque" with delirium tremens -go waddling up and down in isolated columns of fatuity." (TYW, p. 18-48). She visualizes the patterns at various levels, sometimes imagining it with brisk motion. 'Delirium Tremens' refers to critical Alcohol withdrawal symptoms like trembling, puzzlement and hallucinations: she is imagining them on the wall-paper as if to relate to the trembling woman in the wall-paper. She was fed, taken care of and given medications at time. She gained some weight and she gave credit to the wall-paper and how being engaged in it gave her something to be full of some kind of activity. John is happy and rejoices but she doesn't agree with him about her being fully cured.

"better in body perhaps-' I began, and stopped short, for he sat up straight and looked at me with such a stern, reproachful look that I could not say another word." (TYW, p. 18-48)

The kind of control John possesses on her is immense and she keeps mum as she doesn't want to displease him, through his actions he exhibits his real side, the side that wants to suppress any 'fancy' thoughts in her head. He orders her to control herself, forbids her to write and to keep her mind vacant all the time so that she could get well soon. He didn't just tell her to keep her mind vacant but by doing so, her heart was kept vacant too, the way he treated her would never bring them close. In the manner he keeps confessing that all of this is for her, this ancient villa,

this vacation and the treatment; it doesn't make her feel any special about it. She eats herself out slowly everyday by gazing and imagining and moving around the room. This something quite similar to the dilemma the female authors went through in the era, they were supposed to embody the 'The Angel of the House' in their writings. "My dear, you are a young woman. You are writing about a book that has been written by a man. Be sympathetic; be tender; flatter; deceive; use all the arts and wiles of our sex. Never let anybody guess that you have a mind of your own" (TDOTMAOE, p. 203-204). Women, like animals, were trained to become thoughtless, lacking original thoughts and emotions. If at all they raise their opinions or attempt to take a decision, they are told to be misbehaving.

Later, the narrator starts to inspect it closely and enjoys the yellow smell. Slowly the majority of her days are spent sleeping and at night her mind wanders about, this also hints to insomnia and a disturbed state of mind. It could have been because of stress, or traumatic incidents in her life or the horrors of her monotonous life. She was gradually becoming one with the wall-paper, she didn't want anyone to touch it, she wanted to be the one to discover it and catch the woman. "But I am here, and no person touches this paper but me- not ALIVE!" (TYW, p. 28-48). She locks herself on the last day when John has gone away for some work. She is determined to grab hold of the creeping lady in the daylight; she initiates the course of action. In the process while she was getting a hold of the creeping woman, John had returned and was knocking repetitively, as soon as he opened the door he had fainted. "Now why should that man have fainted? But he did, and right across my path by the wall, so that I had to creep over him every time!" (TYW, p. 30-48). She has labelled him as a third person in the end and proceeds to move stealthily around to continue her previous encounter with the lady in the wall-paper. I found a parallel connection between the narrator here and the feeling Virginia Woolf mentions in her *Professions for Women*. Both try to confront the phantom, but at the end they both end up losing their own minds. "It is far harder to kill a phantom than a reality" (TDOTMAOE, p. 203-204), here Woolf stresses on the issue of killing the Angel in the House, she believed escaping reality was far easier than escaping a fantasy or delirium.

"What is poetry, how can I even think of meter, metaphor, as you lie dying, swollen & agonized in your pretty gown" (AP, 2011). At the end, one can say all potential is lost and she remains as nothing but a delusional dead body. A body that would never be capable of making or becoming art.

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